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Small Town Libraries and the Challenges of ADA Compliance:

Can a small town create a better community through ADA compliance?

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Public Policy and Administration 610 Capstone

Professor Michael Ash

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## **Executive Summary**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 was signed into legislation by President George Bush. This was in response to claims that earlier protections left a void for persons with disabilities. ADA is a federal law that mandates compliance and is administered through the U.S. Department of Justice. There are five Titles of the ADA: Title I, the focus is employment protections; Title II, the focus is public services and transportation; Title III, the focus is public accommodations, Title IV, the focus is telecommunications, and Title V, miscellaneous provisions. This paper addresses Title II, public services in reference to public libraries and will be addressing only basic access. ADA compliance is important to a small town as it promotes social equality. Many small communities struggle with budget constraints when addressing ADA compliance projects. Nevertheless, lack of funding is not a valid reason for failure to comply with ADA.

In this paper five alternatives are examined: (1) status quo, remain with the current library, (2) the current library with ADA compliance measures, (3) the current library with ADA compliance measures and an expansion, (4) build a new library, and (5) build a regional library. All five alternatives were evaluated and compared to the following criteria: compliance with ADA regulations, equitable distributions, efficiency, costs, and political feasibility. After reviewing the analysis, it is the recommendation to build a new library. A new facility would be fully ADA compliant and would have modern conveniences and safety features. The library would have the ability to broaden its services. ADA accommodations increase social inclusion, which allows the library to create a more diverse community.

Political feasibility is going to be difficult, as this recommendation is the most expensive alternative. A new library is estimated at a cost of four million dollars. In order to obtain funding, the library should participate in the MBLC construction 50/50 or 60/40 matching grant. Even with the steep price tag, this is a better option, as the facility would meet the needs of the community for the next twenty years. To bring this recommendation to fruition, the residents need to be actively involved and need to have ownership in the process.

## ***Disclosure***

***The researcher is also the current Chairman of Library Trustee Board for the Brimfield Public Library, elected term ending in 2014.***

## **History of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990**

The change toward legal protections for persons with disabilities began over two decades ago with the passage of laws like the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Education for all Handicap Children Act of 1975.<sup>1</sup> In creating the ADA and its regulations, Congress wanted to address the void left by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prevents institutions that receive federal funds from discriminating against disabled persons.<sup>2</sup> During the 1980's, many civil rights advocates and groups that represented disabled persons felt that the federal protections were lacking.<sup>3</sup> The response to the insufficient protections was the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and was signed into legislation by President George Bush. The act is now over 20 years old and the ADA regulations were updated on September 15, 2010. These new regulations were to take effect on March 15, 2011.<sup>4</sup>

Previously, civil rights laws offered protection for woman and minorities but not for disabled persons. "An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment".<sup>5</sup> Before the implementation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Percy, Stephen L. "ADA, Disability Rights, and Evolving Regulatory Federalism." Journal of Federalism Fall 1993, Issue 23. p 88

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Augustus J. "Federal Court Responses to State and Local Claims of 'Undue Burden' in Complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act." Journal of Federalism Summer 1995, Issue 25:3. p 45

<sup>3</sup> Percy, Stephen L. "ADA, Disability Rights, and Evolving Regulatory Federalism." Journal of Federalism Fall 1993, Issue 23, p 88

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Home Page. Available at <http://www.ada.gov/>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Home Page. Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act. Available at <http://www.ada.gov/>.

ADA, people with disabilities did not have the same opportunities to benefit from the services their town could offer. Further, the ADA introduced requirements for town facilities, and policies and procedures that governed those town programs.<sup>6</sup>

The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 is a Federal mandate (federal law). This is part of the Federal civil rights legislation and the U.S. Department of Justice is the department that administers Title II (public services and transportation) and Title III (public accommodation) of the ADA.<sup>7</sup> Public libraries fall in the category of Title II. The Department of Justice performs investigations and resolves all complaints in reference to Title II and III. The state of Massachusetts has the Architectural Access Board that oversees ADA compliance in the Commonwealth. Under the ADA regulations, there is no immunity for any state or local community; all public buildings must be ADA compliant.

The costs of ADA renovations are expensive. Many small communities struggle with budget constraints and turn to federal, state and private grants to fund these ADA compliance projects. Nevertheless, lack of funding is not a valid reason for failure to comply with ADA.

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<sup>6</sup> American with Disabilities Act ADA Guide for Small Towns, U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Section, p1. Also available at <http://www.ada.gov/smtown.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> There are five titles or sections of the ADA: Title I, employment protections; Title II, public services and transportation; Title III, public accommodation, Title IV, telecommunications and Title V, miscellaneous provisions. For the scope of this paper, only Title II, in reference to accessibility of a public library will be addressed and will only be discussing basic access.

## **The Importance of ADA Compliance and Small Town Public Libraries**

One of the many functions of a library is to provide information. Libraries provide this service through book loans, research materials, Internet use, on-line resources, and through the support of the regional library system. Many libraries define themselves as the community center and ADA compliance insures that everyone has access. People with disabilities can face many inequities, such as economic, illiteracy and cultural isolation.<sup>8</sup> Libraries can create a space of equality for disabled persons. Library services often enrich people's lives and provide a meaningful relationship to their community.

## **History of Massachusetts Libraries**

The state of Massachusetts has a long history in reference to libraries. In fact, the first large free municipal library in the United States, the Boston Public Library, was founded in 1848.<sup>9 10</sup> This is a proud tradition and one that quickly caught on as many towns acquired libraries there after.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts consists of 351 cities and towns<sup>11</sup> and currently, there are more than 1,700 Massachusetts libraries throughout the state,<sup>12</sup> of

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<sup>8</sup> Roberts, Ann & Smith, Richard J. "Crash Course in Library Services to People with Disabilities." Libraries Unlimited, Santa Barbara, CA. 2010 p4

<sup>9</sup> Boston Public Library website. Available at <http://www.bpl.org/general/history.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Note: Benjamin Franklin is credited for founding the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731 but was not truly a public library, as it was not paid for by taxes. Also, many other cities lay claim to being the first "public library".

<sup>11</sup> The Official Website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Mass.Gov. Cities & towns, comprehensive information. Available at <http://www.mass.gov/portal/government-taxes/local/cities-towns/cities-and-towns.html>.

<sup>12</sup> MLS Massachusetts Library System Website. About MLS. Available at <http://www.masslibsystem.org/about/>

which 371 are public.<sup>13</sup> The numbers demonstrate that almost every town in the Commonwealth has its own library and at some time, most people have utilized their services.

## **The Brimfield Public Library**

The Brimfield Public Library, also known as, the Danielson-Lincoln Memorial Library is a town building used by many people. The library building is a beautiful, fieldstone-structure with a slate roof. The building, located in the historical section of town, was built in 1904 and was a gift to the town by James Danielson Lincoln, who donated the building in memory of his mother, and his late wife.<sup>14</sup>

In this except from the “Librarian M. Anna Tarbell's report in the Brimfield Town Report for the Year Ending March 6, 1905”,<sup>15</sup> she refers to the library and its dedication in 1904:

“The building was dedicated Thursday, June 30, and was first open for the distribution of books Saturday, July 3. To say that the library's new home in its beauty and convenience has been enjoyed and appreciated by its patrons but partially indicates the expressions of praise that invariably have been heard, as the library has been visited. The building, in its style, and its construction of fieldstone is felt to be peculiarly adapted to its rural setting; while the interior is artistic, simple and homelike. One apt remark voiced the impression given by the reading room. It was made by an Academy pupil living in another town, who said, "Why, this seems more like a home than a library!" She realized the absence of the institutional appearance which is usually so forbidding. It has been the policy of the Brimfield library to make people feel at home and entitled to all the privileges that can be given. This spirit is increased by the attractiveness and hospitable atmosphere of the new building. And there is the additional benefit of beauty of surroundings, a source of enjoyment and culture. The large fireplace built of native stone is a feature which makes

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<sup>13</sup> Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Library directory. Available at [http://mblc.state.ma.us/cgi-bin/ldap\\_search.pl](http://mblc.state.ma.us/cgi-bin/ldap_search.pl). Also note Boston has 25 branches.

<sup>14</sup> The Town of Brimfield Library Website. Available at <http://brimfieldpubliclibrary.org/about.htm>

<sup>15</sup> The Town of Brimfield Library Website. Available at <http://brimfieldpubliclibrary.org/about.htm>

the reading room particularly home-like, and when a fire has occasionally been kindled it has drawn a circle around it. A number of young people had never before seen an open wood fire, and one of our well-known townsmen said, "This is better than books for me." The furniture of the reading room is from the United Craftsman workshops of Syracuse, N.Y., is peculiarly adapted to the character and the design of the room. It is an education in itself, as an example of simplicity, perfect proportion and form, thorough workmanship and adaption to its purpose. Taken all in all, the new library with its fine collection of books may be said to be in harmony with the life of Brimfield which has been characterized by the love of reading and quiet home life, good taste and hospitality".<sup>16</sup>

It seems that history does repeat itself. The excerpt above could have been written recently as those words still hold true. The library does indeed feel more like entering a friend's home than that of a town office. This is not a conventional library by any means, nor is it a quiet space. The library is a hub of activity, people from the area come in to exchange politics, news, and of course books. Children are always welcome and have their own section. All the patrons who use the library have a great deal of love and respect for this space. This library is more than just books; this library represents the local community.

The town of Brimfield has a population of 3339 full-time residents<sup>17</sup> of which 1,800 are listed as patrons of the library.<sup>18</sup> The library is open to the public 24 hours per week, which is, the minimum requirement allowed for membership to the Massachusetts

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<sup>16</sup> The Town of Brimfield Library Website. Available at <http://brimfieldpubliclibrary.org/about.htm>

<sup>17</sup> The Official Website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Mass.Gov. Cities & towns, comprehensive information. See town of Brimfield. Available at <http://www.mass.gov/portal/government-taxes/local/cities-towns/cities-and-towns.html>

<sup>18</sup> As noted by the Brimfield Library Director, Rebecca Wells, a small percentage of patrons are not residents of Brimfield but this is true of other town libraries.



Library System (MLS)<sup>19</sup>. During any month, the average attendance is between 350 and 450 patrons with a circulation of materials at approximately 1,100 pieces per month.<sup>20</sup>

The Brimfield Public Library has serious budget constraints and one of the smallest operating-budgets in town (most libraries have similar budget constraints). The annual library-operating budget is \$88,018 per year.<sup>21</sup> The largest portion of the budget is applied to salaries and wages, which are approximately \$61,600 per year.<sup>22</sup> After salaries, the remaining budget is spent on materials (i.e. books, magazines, DVDs, etc). The library does receive a small amount of state funding that has been reduced each fiscal year. Last year's supplement was approximately 3,200 dollars.

The budget is not the most difficult situation that the library deals with; the larger issue is the lack of ADA compliance. As previously stated, lack of funding is not a valid reason for not complying. To rectify the situation, the Brimfield Library has taken part in different grant programs. The first attempt for a Community Block Grant was rejected (it is unclear what year the grant was applied for).<sup>23</sup> In 2007, the library again joined forces with other town offices and applied for the same Community Block Grant with the help of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. This grant was rejected for a second time in 2008. The Trustee Board was never provided with a reason for the rejection.

The Brimfield Library Director and the Trustee Board has worked closely with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) and applied to the grant

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<sup>19</sup> Belonging to the MLS is important as it allows a library to offer more services because of the ability to acquire materials from other libraries.

<sup>20</sup> As noted by the Brimfield Library Director, Rebecca Wells.

<sup>21</sup> This is the actual budget as per town warrant.

<sup>22</sup> Note: Employees; Director and four other staff members.

<sup>23</sup> The previous grant was possible in 2005 or 2006. The researcher has been unable to confirm.

program through Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program. This program consists of two different grants, the first is for planning and design, and the second is for a construction or renovation project. The library applied for the MBLCP Planning and Design Application 2006/2007<sup>24</sup> grant and received that award in 2007. The planning and design process includes the establishment of a feasibility study committee of which their goal is to create a 20-year plan for the library. After the completion of the study, an architect can be enlisted to create a building plan.

The second grant provides monies for a renovation or the construction of a new library. The grant is a matching award of 50/50 or 60/40, with the town or municipality matching the balance of the award. Potentially, a town could use a 30-year bond for the balance. However, the planning phase of the grant has not been completed and the Brimfield library is unable to apply for the construction grant.

## **Method Used**

For research data collection, the Internet search engines Safari, Firefox and Google were used to locate materials and information on the American Disabilities Act. In addition, reference books such as a “Crash Course in Library Services to People with Disabilities” were referred to for ADA compliance information.

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) website<sup>25</sup> was relied on for specific library data (i.e. library population groupings, date library built, date

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<sup>24</sup> Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. “Since 1990, the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP) has awarded grants to more than 200 cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth for construction of new library buildings, addition/renovations, special projects and the preliminary planning activities essential to building projects”. Available at <http://mblc.state.ma.us/grants/construction/index.php>

<sup>25</sup> Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Available at <http://mblc.state.ma.us/index.php>

of recent renovation). The goal was to create a call list for potential telephone interviews. Data was collected to compare the library in Brimfield to six libraries of equal population size. To test for similarities across the entire sample, two libraries of larger size were used. On the MBLC website homepage is a link “Massachusetts Libraries” and within this link is the drop down menu that includes “Library Directory” and “Accessibility for People with Disabilities”. The link “Library Directory” led to a search of the “Massachusetts Library Directory” and allows searches by library name, municipality or if left blank and “search” was clicked, the entire directory was available. This was a generic list and linked back to individual libraries. The “Accessibility for People with Disabilities” link leads to an option that allows searches for accessibility options, such as wheelchair entrances. This link allowed for searches by municipality or the entire region.

Using the same website, a search for libraries that could be ADA compliant was initiated. On the MBLC homepage, the link named “Advisory Services for Libraries” had a dropdown menu that included; “Library Statistics” which linked to “Public Library Data” with numerous options of which “Main Library facilities” led to a web formatted “FY 2011 Main Library Facilities Data” report link which is a downloadable Excel file. To test for the number of accessible buildings the spreadsheet “FY 2011 Main Library Facilities Data” was sorted by the following means:

- The “FY 2011 Main Library Facilities Data” spreadsheet listed all 370 libraries in the database.
- The spreadsheet was then sorted by population size.
- The data set to be used was for libraries with the population size of 2,000 to 4,999, any libraries not meeting this criterion were deleted.

- The sort resulted in 55 libraries that had populations 2,000 to 4,999 and this list was then sorted by date built, in descending order; then saved as Library Built Date (Table 1).
- The spreadsheet was again sorted using the criteria of recent renovation date; then saved as Library Renovation Date (Table 2).

### **Telephone interviews**

A series of nine telephone interviews took place over the course of this paper. Those interviewed included Rosemary Waltos, Library Building Consultant, of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) and eight library directors participated from Massachusetts Library System (MLS). It was agreed at beginning of the interview that the library directors' comments would remain confidential. The directors and the corresponding library names are listed as numerical locations on the data collection chart (Table 3). The interviews began with a brief introduction and disclosure:

“I am Charlene Coleman, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Brimfield Public Library. I am also a graduate student in the Public Policy Administration Program at the University of Massachusetts. I am working on a paper for my master's program and the paper is about issues that ADA compliance poses for small town libraries. Do you have a few minutes to answer a few questions about ADA compliance?”

***Library Director Interview Questions.*** The interviews consisted of six questions and were used to test the accuracy of the spreadsheet acquired through MBLC.

- Is the library housed in an older building?
- Is the building ADA compliant?
- What is the typical patron?
- Are there any plans to build a new library?
- Are you participating in the MBLC Grant program?

- Is there town support in reference to building a new library?

## **Findings**

Table 1 and Table 2 were used to verify ADA compliance of buildings in the town population size of 2,000 to 4,999 residents. Table 1 illustrates that since 1998 five libraries were the result of new construction. Using Table 2, the assumption was made that if a building had a renovation project date after 1992 it would be potentially ADA compliant. However, the date itself was not proof of compliance. During the telephone interviews, it was found that many libraries had participated in ADA renovations during the late 1990's into the early years of 2000, but these renovations would not pass the current ADA regulations. The Tables did prove useful as a resource when speaking with library directors but were inclusive as data checking resources.

## **Telephone interviews**

The first telephone interview was with Rosemary Waltos, of MBLC. Ms. Waltos was very helpful and provided useful information for this paper. She was familiar with the status of the Brimfield library. The key points of the conversation were:

- All libraries must be compliant to the new 2010 ADA regulations.
- Libraries that are not ADA compliant must follow the reasonable accommodations rule. The library must make accommodations but not at a loss of library resources and or at great expense.
- Many libraries are applying for the MBLC construction grant.
- Older buildings are not always considered for renovations as MBLC has found that these type of "Band-Aid" repairs need to be readdressed to meet current regulations.

- Newer libraries have a 20-year plan established.
- The next construction grant cycle will be for the 2016 construction season.
- Libraries that apply for funding as their own entity have a better chance of receiving funding for ADA compliance projects.

The researcher initiated seven telephone-interviews and one in-person interview. The telephone interviews consisted of five randomly chosen libraries and their directors in Massachusetts with a town population size of 2,000 to 4,999 residents. Two larger towns were chosen for comparison purposes and to test for similarities across the sample. The telephone introduction built rapport because of the researcher's position as chairman of a library board. The researcher feels that the telephone interviews were more successful because of this affiliation. Seven out of the eight directors were very eager to take part of the interview with one director not showing enthusiasm. The responses are summarized below and on Table 3.

- All the libraries in the sample are older buildings with a date range from the later period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Seven of the eight libraries are ADA compliant with at least some accommodations.
- The typical patron population is a mixed age group for seven libraries.
- One director reported having a mature-patron base.
- One director stated that ADA renovations were completed before the library was listed on the historical register as it allowed them to have the project completed without having the extra requirements demanded of the register.

- Two library directors reported that their towns are currently pursuing a new building.
- One library director reported that it is able to renovate its current space.
- One director reported participation in the early stages of MBLC planning grant.
- Three directors reported participation in the MBLC Grant program.
- Three directors reported high political feasibility and support from their respective town.
- Two directors reported low political feasibility.
- One library director suggested the use a 30-year bond to fund the balance of a new library building construction project.
- All directors were optimistic about the MBLC grant program.
- All directors agreed with the principals of ADA.

In addition, some of the findings gained through this project were presented to the Brimfield Library Board of Trustees on two occasions; during the regular board meetings in March 2012 and April 2012<sup>26</sup>.

## **Criteria Needed for a Public Library**

### ***Compliance with ADA Regulations***

All patrons must be able to gain access to the interior of the building. All doors and bathrooms must be accessible. The aisles and stacks need to be wide enough to maneuver wheelchairs. All levels of the library need to be easily reached and ramps or elevators should be utilized to attain other levels of the building. One of the most

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<sup>26</sup> At the time of submission for this paper, the researcher had not met with the board for May 2012 meeting.

important locations in a library is the circulation desk and that should be available to all patrons.

### ***Equitable Distributions***

One of the attributes of the library is that patrons should feel a sense of ownership. The library is beneficial to its community because of the creative services it provides. A library that is under going an ADA compliance renovation has to balance the needs of all patrons. If the renovation takes away from library resources, the entire community suffers.

### ***Efficiency***

A library should supply basic services to its patrons and should have the capacity to meet the needs of the surrounding community. The building should be able to comfortably accommodate ADA compliance regulations without limiting or losing its ability to provide services for its patrons.

Further, there should not be limitations to the physical location of the library. It should be central to the town and have adequate parking and accessible spaces. The lot size should be adequate in size to accommodate an addition to the library or to allow for a new building. If the building is on the historic register, all should be done to preserve that integrity. On the other hand, if the building proves to be limiting ADA accommodations, other options should be pursued.

### ***Costs***

Accurate cost estimates are an important part of this process and voters need to be aware of all options available. If the decision leans toward an ADA compliance update



without an expansion, this could be forcing real costs on the entire community due to the depleted library resources. In the end, the taxpayers are paying more in taxes for less available library services and everyone loses.

### ***Political Feasibility***

The surrounding community should be supportive of the necessary changes needed for ADA compliance. However, political feasibility is not the end all. The ADA is a federal law that mandates compliance. Town voters have the ability to vote on the alternatives but cannot vote against compliance.

## **A Comparison of the Alternatives**

The analysis presented in this section is a comparison of status quo and four alternatives: the current library with ADA compliance measures, the current library with ADA compliance measures and an expansion, build a new library, and build a regional library.

## **The Current Brimfield Public Library**

### ***Compliance with ADA Regulations (status quo)***

The Brimfield Library is not ADA compliant by the 2010 standards. The library's current location offers very little public access. The front entrance is difficult for someone using a wheelchair or having a mobility issue due to the granite steps and heavy door.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, any patrons with mobility issues are restricted from parts of the library due to steps leading into an adjacent wing. A ramp has been suggested to rectify

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<sup>27</sup> Due to the historical nature of the building, a variance amendment was granted in 2007 for the front steps of the library.

the situation, but this is problematic due to limited space. Installation of a lift is a better alternative. The building's bathroom and circulation desk are not currently ADA compliant. Lastly, the director and staff do not have office space in the current building.

### ***Efficiency***

The library is a little over 2,000 square feet and encompasses three rooms. The building did have an addition in 1966, the "Sherman Room" that houses the town's artifacts. To further complicate the situation, the physical location is limited for any future expansion due to its very small lot size of .44 acres. The building does not have a formal parking lot and the use of an easement along a state road is utilized. The building does not have air conditioning and most building systems are dated.

### ***Political Feasibility***

The building is deeded as a library and is a historically registered building. Many members of the community take pride in this achievement. The political feasibility is high for leaving the building status quo. However, this is only a temporary condition that is potentially dependent on the demands for ADA compliance.

## **The Current Library with ADA Compliance Measures**

### ***Compliance with ADA***

A renovation will allow the library to improve public access and egress. The building would have accessible doors, bathrooms, and a lift that would reach all areas of the library. Everyone would easily reach the circulation desk. The exterior approaches would be upgraded with lighting and parking.

### ***Efficiency***

If there were to be a renovation without an expansion, the result will be a reduction of valuable space and lower inventory at the cost of upgrading accessibility. Currently, the granite steps and front door have a variance from the Architectural Access Board due the historic status of the building. These adjustments limit ADA compliance and will likely affect the back of the building. This type of ADA project would be the least efficient of any of the alternatives.

### ***Equitable Distribution***

The library would now offer social inclusion to all those that wish to participate. Again, this type of renovation does reduce the size of an already small library and fewer resources will be available to all. Further, this type of renovation runs the risk of making patrons feel like they are second-class citizens because of having to use an entrance in the rear of the building.

### ***Costs***

The cost of the renovation obtained in 2008, during the participation of the Community Grant, was estimated at \$391,260 (this is a “rough” estimate and did not include the 40% increase for contingencies that are required in public projects). The library would have to use the town annex’s parking lot and create an accessible walkway to the rear of the library. There are additional fees for the re-grading of the parking lot, creating the ramp to the library and the landscaping enhancements.

### ***Political Feasibility***

The political feasibility is high as this is a minimum renovation and the community wants to protect the historic building.

## **Current Library with New Expansion of Space**

### ***Compliance with ADA***

The renovation will allow the library to provide public access. The building would have accessible doors, bathrooms, ramps or an elevator that would reach all areas of the library. A new circulation desk would be available to serve all patrons. In addition, the new plan might allow for office space for the director and staff.

### ***Efficiency***

The current building with an expansion could result in an increase in capacity. However, this is a costly venture due to the expense of upgrading an older building with a modern wing. The advantage of this approach is that the historical integrity of the building is protected.

### ***Equitable Distribution***

This is a better option, as there will increased available space and the library would not lose its capacity for inventory. This is a better cost-benefit to taxpayers.

### ***Costs***

The cost of the renovation would fall between \$230-250 per square foot but realistically could run into the millions. In order to estimate this type of renovation a contractor and architect must be contacted. The funding of the renovation would fall on the taxpayers' shoulders as locating grants has proven to be problematic.

### ***Political Feasibility***

The political feasibility is considered medium, as this is a costly renovation. Increases to the tax rate are highly probable and in the past have been unpopular with voters. Changes to the historical nature of the library could be a major deterrent.

## **Build a New Library**

### ***Compliance with ADA***

A new library building would be fully ADA compliant and all in the community can benefit from its modern conveniences. The library would have current safety features. Most importantly, this option would allow for parking at the facility.

### ***Efficiency***

The library would now have the ability to serve patrons that have special needs, such as physical, learning, sight, or auditory impairments. The library would have the ability to expand on future accessibility services such as computers for the hearing and sight impaired. Due to the new library location, the old library could remain as the primary artifacts location.

### ***Equitable Distribution***

The library would be larger in size and many more events could be available to all patrons. Various other people in the community would be able to enjoy the library.

### ***Costs***

However, this is an expensive venture. According to Rosemary Waltos of MBLC, a new library could be estimated at four million dollars. With this said, the Brimfield Library would have to participate in the MBLC construction grant and obtain at least the 50/50 matching of funds. As suggested by another library director, the town could hold a 30-year bond on the new building. There is an additional expense required of this project due to that there is no available town land for such a venture. As a part of this project,

land would have to be negotiated for purchase, provided as gift or taken by imminent domain.

### ***Political Feasibility***

The political feasibility is low due to the steep price tag. The town recently paid for a renovation to the town hall and there are now repairs required on the town annex building. At this time, there does not appear to be any additional town funds available for a new building. However, the ability to utilize the MBLC construction grant and the 30-year bond could be used to influence this alternative.

### **Build a Regional Library**

Building a regional library is a new idea and a current trustee member suggested it as well as, from one of the director during a telephone interview. At this time, this is not a viable option but the idea does warrant some thought.

### ***Compliance with ADA***

As with any new building, the library would be fully ADA compliant for the communities that participate in this project.

### ***Efficiency***

A regional library could meet the needs of two or three communities. In addition, this would be only one building for the participating towns to maintain.

### ***Equitable Distribution***

The library would offer a more diverse community to many more patrons. However, this is not an efficient situation for the patrons of Brimfield who would have drive to another town to fully utilize the services of the library.

### ***Costs***

The size of the library would have to be increased to meet the additional needs of the participating towns and would reflect a larger project on all scales. A positive note is that this cost could be split between the participating towns. However, more research is needed to find out if the MBLC grant would cover this type of library construction.

### ***Political Feasibility***

The political feasibility is low due to the complications of involving other town governments. This would not be popular with Brimfield voters as they might feel a loss of control in the asset.

### **Recommendation**

After reviewing the analysis, the recommendation is to build a new library. After performing the analysis across the alternatives, it was found that constructing a new library measures higher across the criteria (Table 4). A new library would be fully ADA compliant and would have all the ADA amenities. A new building would have modern conveniences and safety features. The library would have the ability to expand its services and this is its greatest asset. There are any numbers of ways to increase services from new computers to providing special access to patrons. Because of the expansion of services, increased social participation could take place and the library could potentially offer a more diverse community.

Political feasibility is going to be a huge hurdle to overcome, as this recommendation is the most expensive option. The construction costs for a new library are estimated at four million dollars, but this can be justified. The library could

participate in the MBLC construction grant and obtain at least a 50/50 matching of funds. If the matching grant was awarded, the town could hold a 30-year bond for the balance. The money would be well spent as facility would be new and would meet the needs of the community for the next twenty years.

To bring this recommendation to fruition, some of the following events should take place. The first is to hold an information drive, as the benefits of a new library have to reach all members in the community. This can be through mailings, brochures, and information on the library website. Even a blog or a Facebook page could be initiated. Town meetings and information sessions are extremely useful ways to alleviate taxpayers concerns.

An excellent medium is to encourage residents to take part in the fund raising and information campaigns. People need to feel they have ownership in the process and empowered people are more likely to lead the charge. This library is their resource and active participation is required to preserve that resource.

Another area that many boards forget to utilize is to communicate with other town boards and garner their support. Again, the power of information is key to success. The voters need to be aware that by not promoting a new library, they could be potentially limiting their services.

## **Conclusion**

As a board member and especially as the current chairperson of the trustee board, the researcher grapples with what best serves the entire community<sup>28</sup>. How does one

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<sup>28</sup> Elected to the board in 2005, current term ends 2014. Chairman since 2009.



balance the needs of a community without causing undue to someone else? In a perfect world, a library would exist that all could use without any limitations. The board has to continue to search for funding sources and solutions in order to rectify the ADA compliance issue. The board needs to encourage full compliance without a potential loss of library services.

After reviewing the analysis, the recommendation is to build a new library. A new library would be fully ADA compliant and would have modern conveniences and safety features. ADA accommodations increase social inclusion, which allows the library to be a more diverse community.

More libraries in Massachusetts are opting to build new buildings. The decision is supported by the MBLC as it has found that ADA compliance renovations to older buildings are just putting temporary Band-Aids on the situation. The problem is not ADA but that the costs of these projects place undue burden on small town budgets. This is an expensive alternative for a town but the result is a library that meets the needs of the community for the next twenty years.

Voters have the right to refuse to build a new library as other towns have done across the Commonwealth. It is important to note that when votes like this happen, it further complicates the issue and sets the town up for potential suit through ADA. Being served is expensive and could be detrimental to the reputation of the town.

Can a small town create a better community through ADA compliance? The answer is yes. The town and library become more diverse through the implementation of ADA compliance. ADA promotes a better community because it assists in creating

equality for all members of the community. For a small town, this is especially important, as the library is generally one of the major community centers.

Lastly, ADA is serious matter. In fact, this is a federal law that mandates compliance. This mandate has been in effect for more than twenty years and libraries need to be compliant, there are no exceptions.

Libraries Sorted by Date Built					
Location	Municipality	Library Population Groupings	Main library facility gross square feet	Year current main library built	Recent renovation year
Oak Bluffs Public Library	Oak Bluffs	2,000-4,999	18000	2005	1990
Dennis Public Library	Dennis	2,000-4,999	10000	2005	2005
Sargent Memorial Library	Boxborough	2,000-4,999	12000	2005	2005
Sunderland Public Library	Sunderland	2,000-4,999	9400	2004	
Dunstable Free Public Library	Dunstable	2,000-4,999	9030	1998	
Truro Public Library	Truro	2,000-4,999	11623	1999	2002
West Tisbury Free Public Library	West Tisbury	2,000-4,999	5620	1992	1995
Millville Free Public Library	Millville	2,000-4,999	2200	1986	1997
West Dennis Free Public Library	Dennis	2,000-4,999	6634	1982	2003
Huntington Public Library	Huntington	2,000-4,999	2128	1975	
Sherborn Library	Sherborn	2,000-4,999	18000	1971	2000
Avon Public Library	Avon	2,000-4,999	7450	1971	2002
Vineyard Haven Public Library	Tisbury	2,000-4,999	9000	1963	2000
Osterville Free Library	Barnstable	2,000-4,999	8675	1958	1987
East Brookfield Public Library	East Brookfield	2,000-4,999	3444	1958	2007
G. A. R. Memorial Library	West Newbury	2,000-4,999	7785	1939	1987
Wellfleet Public Library	Wellfleet	2,000-4,999	10000	1930	1989
Berlin Public Library	Berlin	2,000-4,999	3028	1929	2009
Richards Memorial Library	Paxton	2,000-4,999	7169	1926	1978
Dennis Memorial Library Association	Dennis	2,000-4,999	5600	1924	2005
Lanesborough Public Library	Lanesborough	2,000-4,999	1300	1916	1989
Woods Hole Public Library	Falmouth	2,000-4,999	5330	1913	2008
Holland Public Library	Holland	2,000-4,999	670	1912	1990
Bushnell-Sage Library	Sheffield	2,000-4,999	10000	1908	2007
Brimfield Public Library	Brimfield	2,000-4,999	2266	1904	1966
Edgartown Free Public Library	Edgartown	2,000-4,999	6780	1904	1975
Boylston Public Library	Boylston	2,000-4,999	4000	1904	1976
Bolton Public Library	Bolton	2,000-4,999	13500	1904	2010
Ashby Free Public Library	Ashby	2,000-4,999	11200	1901	2006
Cheshire Public Library	Cheshire	2,000-4,999	924	1900	2002
Whelden Memorial Library	Barnstable	2,000-4,999	1907	1899	1989
Eastham Public Library	Eastham	2,000-4,999	8632	1897	1988
Dickinson Memorial Library	Northfield	2,000-4,999	8960	1897	2008
West Falmouth Library, Inc.	Falmouth	2,000-4,999	2634	1896	1972
Meekins Public Library	Williamsburg	2,000-4,999	6500	1896	2003
Jacob Sears Memorial Library	Dennis	2,000-4,999	2100	1896	2006
Nahant Public Library	Nahant	2,000-4,999	5400	1895	1996
Paige Memorial Library	Hardwick	2,000-4,999	1625	1895	1998
Gleason Public Library	Carlisle	2,000-4,999	11500	1895	2000
Hatfield Public Library	Hatfield	2,000-4,999	2076	1894	1957
T.O.H.P. Burnham Free Library	Essex	2,000-4,999	1800	1894	1986
Haston Free Public Library	North Brookfield	2,000-4,999	12662	1894	2007
Plympton Public Library	Plympton	2,000-4,999	4000	1891	1991
Warren Public Library	Warren	2,000-4,999	2835	1890	2008
Princeton Public Library	Princeton	2,000-4,999	7105	1884	2001
Merrick Public Library	Brookfield	2,000-4,999	2500	1884	2003
Merriam-Gilbert Public Library	West Brookfield	2,000-4,999	4500	1880	1997
Hubbardston Public Library	Hubbardston	2,000-4,999	2160	1874	2000
Elizabeth Taber Memorial Library	Marion	2,000-4,999	6000	1872	1980
Hinsdale Public Library	Hinsdale	2,000-4,999	2850	1866	2001
Cushman Library	Barnardston	2,000-4,999	2500	1863	1983
Provincetown Public Library	Provincetown	2,000-4,999	10990	1860	2011
South Dennis Free Public Library	Dennis	2,000-4,999	1298	1857	2010
Cotuit Library	Barnstable	2,000-4,999	5938	1820	2011
Sturgis Library	Barnstable	2,000-4,999	10750	1644	2011
Cotuit Library	Barnstable	2,000-4,999	5938	1820	2011
Sturgis Library	Barnstable	2,000-4,999	10750	1644	2011

Table 1. Data for the spreadsheet obtained through the MBLC website

Libraries Sorted By Date Last Renovated					
Location	Municipality	Library Population Groupings	Main library facility gross square feet	Year current main library built	Recent renovation year
Cotuit Library	Barnstable	2,000-4,999	5938	1820	2011
Provincetown Public Library	Provincetown	2,000-4,999	10990	1860	2011
Sunderland Public Library	Sunderland	2,000-4,999	9400	2004	
Sturgis Library	Barnstable	2,000-4,999	10750	1644	2011
Bolton Public Library	Bolton	2,000-4,999	13500	1904	2010
South Dennis Free Public Library	Dennis	2,000-4,999	1298	1857	2010
Berlin Public Library	Berlin	2,000-4,999	3028	1929	2009
Dickinson Memorial Library	Northfield	2,000-4,999	8960	1897	2008
Warren Public Library	Warren	2,000-4,999	2835	1890	2008
Woods Hole Public Library	Falmouth	2,000-4,999	5330	1913	2008
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East Brookfield Public Library	East Brookfield	2,000-4,999	3444	1958	2007
Haston Free Public Library	North Brookfield	2,000-4,999	12662	1894	2007
Ashby Free Public Library	Ashby	2,000-4,999	11200	1901	2006
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Princeton Public Library	Princeton	2,000-4,999	7105	1884	2001
Gleason Public Library	Carlisle	2,000-4,999	11500	1895	2000
Hubbardston Public Library	Hubbardston	2,000-4,999	2160	1874	2000
Sherborn Library	Sherborn	2,000-4,999	18000	1971	2000
Vineyard Haven Public Library	Tisbury	2,000-4,999	9000	1963	2000
Paige Memorial Library	Hardwick	2,000-4,999	1625	1895	1998
Merriam-Gilbert Public Library	West Brookfield	2,000-4,999	4500	1880	1997
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Oak Bluffs Public Library	Oak Bluffs	2,000-4,999	18000	2005	1990
Lanesborough Public Library	Lanesborough	2,000-4,999	1300	1916	1989
Wellfleet Public Library	Wellfleet	2,000-4,999	10000	1930	1989
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Hatfield Public Library	Hatfield	2,000-4,999	2076	1894	1957
Dunstable Free Public Library	Dunstable	2,000-4,999	9030	1998	
Huntington Public Library	Huntington	2,000-4,999	2128	1975	

Table 2. Data for the spreadsheet obtained through the MBLC website

Library Information						
Location	Gift	ADA Accessible	Type of Patrons	Plans To Build A New Library	Participating in MBLC Grant	Political Feasibility
1		Yes, older accommodations	Mostly older	Currently in process	Yes	High
2		Yes, but did not pass ABA inspection	Mixed	Currently in processes	No	Low
3	Yes	No	Mixed	In the planning stage	Yes	Low
4		ADA accommodations made in 2000	Mixed	No	No	High
5		Some accommodations made, no restroom	Mixed	No	No	N/A
6		ADA accommodated addition in 2003	Mixed	No	No	N/A
7	Yes	"Making reasonable efforts", using the first floor only.	Mixed	A current renovation to existing building	Yes	High
8		2001 ADA compliance renovations	Mixed	No	No	N/A

Table 3.

MATRIX FOR SMALL TOWN LIBRARIES AND THE CHALLENGES OF ADA COMPLIANCE					
	Alternatives				
Goals	Current Library Status Quo	Current Library with ADA Compliance	Current Library with Addition	New Library	Build a Regional Library
Efficient Use of Library space	Low - Historic building is preserved.	Low - Loss of space and of available materials. (Protection of the building)	Low - Building might be slightly larger than original space.	High -New and modern building.	Medium - Location not convenient for patrons of Brimfield.
Compliance with ADA regulations	No	High - Building would be compliant.	High - Building would be compliant.	High - Building would be compliant.	High - Building would be compliant.
Equitable Distribution	Low	Low - Less overall resources for the entire community.	Medium - More of the community would be able to enjoy and utilize the library.	High - More of the community would be able to enjoy and utilize the library.	Medium - Full inclusion for those that can make it to the central location.
Costs	n/a	Low - Price of renovation - \$371,260 (08 "rough" estimate).	Medium - \$230-\$250 ** per square foot for new construction.	High - Estimated at 4 million dollars. Available grant from the MBLC at 50% or 60% of the cost	Medium - Cost would be split the between participating towns.
Politically Feasible	High feasibility but only temporary situation.	High feasibility due to past voting repair initiatives on other town buildings.	Medium feasibility, would be a hard sell but might be a better option over a new building.	Low feasibility. Expense is deterrent. Available grant from the MBLC at 50% or 60% of the cost.	Low feasibility. Different political ideology differences between the three towns.

Table 4.

After the performing the analysis across the alternatives, the alternative building a new library measures higher.

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